

QUESTION:

Anuch from the Netherlands asks, “Can you explain to me why the text of the Vice President's oath of office for the Inauguration was much longer than the text of the President? Why is it not the same text for both?”

ANSWER:

The difference is based upon the Constitution. The President’s oath of office is detailed in Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which reads:

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

When George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States on 30 April 1789 in New York City, he added the phrase, “So help me God” at the end of the oath of office. That phrase has been used in every inauguration following that first one, even though the Founding Fathers did not require it.

However, there is no similar provision for the text of the Vice-President’s oath of office. Article VII of U.S. Constitution states that Congress is the body that drafts the oaths for other federal officials. Congress decided that the Vice President will take the same oath of office as all other federal officials. This oath is prescribed by statute (5 U.S.C. 3331; I, 128) and reads:

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.”